

## WRITING FOR THE AUTHOR Frequently Asked Questions

By James McConnachie, Editor

*Does The Author accept uncommissioned articles?*

The majority of articles are commissioned, so space tends to be at a premium, but I am always keen to see proposals from members. I will read pieces submitted on spec but prefer to see a pitch first.

*Does The Author pay?*

Yes, on acceptance.

*What length should an article be?*

It depends on the subject, so it's best to discuss an idea with me first. Most articles are somewhere within the limits of 700–1500 words.

*Who do I pitch to? Where do I send my proposal?*

To me: James McConnachie (Editor) at the Society of Authors:  
theauthor@societyofauthors.org, or c/o 24 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4EH

*What kinds of articles get published in The Author?*

Articles that make a particular argument or are tightly focused on a single issue related to writing or publishing, and those of practical use to the SoA's membership. Articles that struggle to find space are those about recently published books, even where they are about the logistics of the process; I am more interested in articles that reflect on specific issues that arose, written with informed hindsight e.g. after a year or so. Memoirs, career retrospectives and complaints don't tend to be accepted, unless they're linked to an issue of wider relevance to the membership. The Author rarely publishes obituaries or poetry.

*What rights does The Author take? Can I republish elsewhere?*

Contributors retain copyright. We take first rights (the right to be the first to publish the article) in The Author and a non-exclusive right to include the article for non-commercial purposes on our website. Once an article has been published in The Author, you are at liberty to reuse it as you will (including republishing or blogging) – though we would appreciate a credit to the effect that the piece first appeared in the journal of the Society of Authors. We only very rarely accept articles that have already appeared elsewhere.

*Who has editorial control?*

All articles are edited, but any changes are checked with the contributor who is also sent a proof before publication, for approval.

*Does The Author use images?*

If an image which is out of copyright (or in which you own the copyright) strongly suggests itself, it's useful to know about it. Other than that, most articles include an author photo (and a line or two of biography).

*Who obtains permissions?*

Contributors are expected to ensure quotations and illustrations do not infringe copyright, and are expected to obtain and pay for any permissions that may be needed.

*Should I supply footnotes?*

If a fact is sourced from the public domain (e.g. a newspaper article), it's helpful if the reference is supplied – either as part of the article (“Joan Jones, writing in The Guardian on 9 March 2015, claimed...”) or noted separately. But The Author doesn't generally publish footnotes.

*Do you offer any advice on pitching, for writers who haven't done it before?*

There are no rules, but I would suggest that you put the central idea in the first sentence of an emailed pitch, then introduce yourself briefly, then sketch the skeleton of the piece or the key points. Ensure the subject hasn't recently been covered.